

## **Chapter Four**

### **Alternate Assessment based on Alternate Achievement Standards: Indiana Standards Tool for Alternate Reporting (ISTAR)**

#### **The Purpose of ISTAR Assessments in Grades 3-8 and 10**

Federal law (IDEA 2008) and state law require that all students participate in Indiana's assessment system. For most students with special needs, this law requires participation in ISTEP+ assessments, with or without accommodations. For students with significant cognitive disabilities, however, the Case Conference Committee, utilizing the criteria for determining eligibility to participate, may determine that the *Indiana Standards Tool for Alternate Reporting (ISTAR)* is the most appropriate assessment. The criteria can be found at: <http://www.doe.in.gov/assessment/alternate-assessments>.

ISTAR is the only alternate assessment that is recognized in Indiana for the purpose of statewide accountability. It is administered in grades 3-8 and 10 in English/Language Arts and Mathematics. It is also administered in grades 4, 6 and 10 for Science, and in grades 5 and 7 for Social Studies.

ISTAR is based on the same foundation of rigorous real world content included in ISTEP+, while taking into account the unique characteristics of students with significant cognitive disabilities. The Content Connectors are the alternate achievement standards. They include the necessary knowledge and skills that students with significant cognitive disabilities need in order to reach the learning targets or critical big ideas within the Indiana Academic Standards. The ISTAR Assessment is focused on the Content Connectors, which are modified from the Indiana Academic Standards. The Aligned Content Connectors can be found at: <http://www.doe.in.gov/assessment/alternate-assessments>.

#### **Structure and Content of ISTAR for 2016-2017**

Students with significant cognitive disabilities are a diverse population with a variety of needs. In order to develop items across a broad set of ability ranges to address varying student needs, three levels of items, called "Tiers", were created.

- **Tier 1** - Tier 1 questions use simple and direct language. Graphics are provided for most answer choices, along with text, which give students visual support to answer the questions.
- **Tier 2** - Tier 2 questions are more complex than Tier 1. They may include more introductory phrases in the questions and fewer graphics in answer choices than Tier 1. They also include a greater level of complexity in how students respond to the questions than in Tier 1.
- **Tier 3** - Tier 3 includes more detailed directions and questions. There is more text and few to no graphics in the answer choices. Content may consist of more abstract ideas and require students to make inferences. This Tier involves more complexity in how students respond to the questions than in Tier 2.

## **Testing Accommodations**

The approved accommodations for ISTAR are outlined in *Appendix C*. These testing accommodations may be administered by classroom teachers in addition to program area staff (i.e., an EL or Special Education teacher). Test examiners must be made aware of each student's allowable accommodations.

### **Prior to testing**

The CTC is required to access the vendors' site to set up test administration.

## **ISTAR (Grades 3-8 and 10) Assessment Windows for 2016-2017**

Please review the "Assessment Testing Windows" section of the Office of Student Assessment's website at <http://www.doe.in.gov/assessment> for more details on testing windows.

**The results from the ISTAR assessment must be communicated to parents in a timely manner.**

### NOTE:

For additional information regarding ISTAR, please access <http://www.doe.in.gov/assessment/alternate-assessments>.